

DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE
National Urban League

REPORT ON TRENTON, NEW JERSEY

PART I - A

January 23, 1952

MEMORANDUM

TO: Reginald A. Johnson, Director
Field Services
and
Mr. Julius A. Thomas, Director
Industrial Relations and Vocational Guidance

FROM: Ray E. Morris
Field Secretary

SUBJ: MUL-UCDS Exploratory survey of the Impact of the Defense
Emergency on Trenton, New Jersey, and the Relationship of
Trenton, New Jersey to the Social Problems Connected With
Developments in Bucks County. December 17 to 19, 1951.

CONCLUSIONS

Trenton has been affected by the defense effort, but not very much in terms of over-all increases. On the other hand, there have been great changes brought about by reductions in production of consumer lines and by material shortages. Increases in war-aided (durable goods) lines have only topped these reductions in other lines by comparatively small margins. This is true partly because of the influence of a large number of agricultural workers in the economy.

In-migration is increasing at a rapid rate, but is limited and/or frustrated by inadequate housing. However, when new Bucks County industrial installations are ready for production there is every indication that Trenton will experience terrific strains. Very little is being done now to prevent those strains. Leadership has adopted a policy of readiness to serve when the time comes.

A larger proportion of Negroes than of whites should be expected to use Trenton as a base for their search for jobs (both in the Trenton area and across the river), housing, recreation and other accommodations and services. No coordinated leadership is preparing for this.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is recommended that Trenton be the site from which some direct operations of the National Urban League (outlined in the General Recommendations of Part I of the Report on Bucks County) should emanate.

2. That efforts be directed toward problems local to Trenton as well as towards problems of the over-all lower Bucks County situation.

POPULATION

Trenton City (1950): 128,009 - an increase of 2.7 per cent over 1940; nonwhites: 14,532 - an increase of 55.6 per cent over 1940, representing 11.35 per cent of the total population.

Metropolitan area (1950): 229,781 - an increase of 16.5 per cent over 1940; nonwhites: 20,627 - an increase of 48.0 per cent over 1940, representing 8.9 per cent of the total population.

MAJOR EMPLOYERS

There are 17 plants in Trenton with more than 500 employees. A list of these (and the more important employers in terms of Urban League program) is deposited in the surveyor's files in the Industrial Relations Department, together with the most recent count of employees in each of the firms. The extent to which Trenton is affected by the defense emergency is indicated, in part, by the fact that 62.02 per cent of employers in the major occupational categories are considered "essential" employers.

In the major occupational fields there are some 356 employers. Two hundred fifty-eight employers have an appreciable amount of work considered essential to the defense emergency; 78 essential major employers each have more than 30 employees, with total employees numbering 25,459. One hundred eighty essential major employers each have less than 30 employees, with total employees numbering 1,966. Total essential employment is 27,425. In addition to the 258 essential major employers (with 27,425 employees) there are 98 major employers not considered "essential" that have a total of approximately 27,000 employees.

EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT CHANGES

By January, 1951, six months after the outbreak of the Korean war, total employment had risen by 5 per cent above January, 1950. June, 1950 total employment was 104,100; unemployment stood at 8,300. On the same date, manufacturing employment totaled 53,600, almost up to the post-war peak of 55,600 reached in November, 1948. Unemployment has fluctuated a good bit, because of lay-offs, cutbacks, and other adjustments in consumer lines. Increases in employment have been important in durable goods. Employment in the rubber group has gone up 20 per cent.

Occupational Shortages

It is estimated that Trenton will be short some 5,000 workers in the next eight to twelve months. Occupational shortages exist for engineers, craftsmen, auto mechanics, stenographers and typists, and registered nurses.

SOCIAL AGENCIES

Trenton social services are representative of the best areas of civic consciousness. No significant impact of the defense emergency has been documented; but such agencies as the Travelers' Aid Society have noted an increased number of in-migrants.

In-migrants are more of an indication of the unity of Trenton and lower Bucks County than of the impact of the defense emergency on Trenton itself. The Travelers' Aid reports that most in-migrants come to Trenton in order to try their luck at getting jobs in lower Bucks County.

Although a significant and an increasing number of persons look to Trenton social agencies for help, it is reported, generally, that strong resistance exists in lower Bucks County against central agency organization of Trenton being tied with what is being developed along those lines in lower Bucks County.

Most Trenton voluntary social agencies serve residents of lower Bucks County also. A report, according to Mr. Peter Auerbach, Executive Secretary, Trenton Council of Social Agencies, was written by Mrs. Irene F. Conrad, Executive Associate UCDS, entitled, "Trenton's Relationship With Lower Bucks County in Terms of Service Provided", includes the following paragraph.

"It is quite apparent that the degree of service given by voluntary agencies in and around Trenton, New Jersey, to the immediate neighbors across the river, is not only significant, but indicates the oneness of this area."

Social services to Negroes cannot be evaluated without reference to at least one circumstance that some sources reported as not merely an isolated instance. In some responsible segments of the Negro community a long-standing question has existed regarding services rendered Negroes in the three hospitals in Trenton. Recently, in the case of one of the hospitals, a local civic organization felt pressed by circumstances to take some action. A letter was written to the hospital, and copies sent to several other local organizations and civic groups. A good bit of racial tension developed as a result of the general situation; and, although responsible leadership attempted to handle things quietly, the affair has been discussed in so many circles that it is now at best an "open secret."

A casual survey of factors would indicate that local top-drawer social agency leadership, capable and interested, can easily remedy such situations as the hospital affair. Upon closer study, however, the problems are deeper than appears on the surface, and include much broader problems than that top-drawer leadership would probably want included in its role. Conflicting attitudes and statements of responsible leadership shows, moreover, that in some segments these problems have been seriously underestimated.

HOUSING

The State Employment Service administrative office, in connection with its interest in the newly-appointed Area Labor Management Committee, considers housing to be the number one problem in Trenton. Trenton is crowded now, but some additional accommodations could result from rooms in some dwelling units. These additions would be too few to ease any appreciable amount of the housing problem, and would be considered only as emergency arrangements for totally unhouseed persons. Present efforts are mainly official efforts in the continuing public housing building program.

OBSERVATIONS

Some highly capable and coordinated efforts should be developed in Trenton to provide for smoother handling of problems that will certainly increase almost from week to week. Trenton is well-fixed as a repository of alert leadership. The Delaware Valley United Fund and the Trenton Council of Social Agencies are particularly impressive in that regard. The state offices of the New Jersey Department of Labor and Industry and its Division of Employment Security, are in Trenton and many